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Music in Informal and formal learning situations in ECEC

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Abstract: The aim of this article is, through theory, research and practical experiences, to discuss how informal teaching and learning situations exemplified by activities including music plays a part in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

The theoretical frame in this article is based on perspectives on informal teaching and learning in music and in general (Green 2002, 2008; Henze, 2009; Folkestad, 2006; Mak, 2007). The tradition in Norwegian ECEC centers has been based on informal learning processes mainly through social interaction, play, dialogs, aesthetical and outdoor activities in everyday life.

ECEC teachers challenged to articulate Informal teaching and learning as professional educators. In light of that statement it is introduced, theoretical perspectives and studies of professions (Abbott, 1988; Grimen, 2008; Heggen, 2008; Polanyi, 2002).

The author describes and discusses opportunities of music in ECEC centers and how music can contribute learning in informal learning situations. The discussion refers narrative episodes from observations of ECEC practice. Methodology is based on thematic analysis inspired of Riessman (2008) and Polkinghorne (1995).

Keywords: informal teaching and learning, professions, music in Early Childhood Education, teacher role

Introduction

The aim of this article is, through theory, research and practical experiences, to discuss how informal teaching and learning situations exemplified by activities including music plays a part in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). The concept of learning is complicated and it has been discussed in Educational settings from different theoretical perspectives, knowledge and experiences.

In this article I will discuss perspectives of teaching and learning that not many educators and researchers have been focused in education literature until now.

We have witnessed a political debate in Norwegian media about quality of Early Childhood Education and Care centers. It has been asserted that a more systematic education in basic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics ought to be prioritized in ECEC centers. It is expected that systematization, or a specially adapted educational approach, will result in children improving their basic skills. The justification of this approach is based on national results of basic skills testing in primary schools. The idea is to start early to improve skills and the results in primary schools. The pedagogical tradition in Early Childhood Education in Norway has not emphasized structural and planned learning situations. The tradition has been based on informal learning processes mainly through social interaction, play, dialogs, aesthetical and outdoor activities in everyday life. The ECEC teachers are challenged to articulate their knowledge and opinion about teaching and learning in ECEC centers. My contribution in this context is to articulate the discussions in light of music in informal learning situations.

The article consists of three sections. In the first section I describe and problematize the theme informal and formal teaching and learning related to theoretical perspectives. In the second section I describe and discuss ECEC teacher role and the need articulation of professional knowledge in light of informal learning situations. The third section I discuss “What is music” in ECEC in general and finally, how music can contribute learning in informal learning situations. In the last section I refer to narrative episodes based on observations of practice in ECEC centers.

Theoretical perspectives and studies on Formal and informal learning

Research projects on learning in different arenas and society contexts got a high priority when *The Research Council of Norway* provided funding for research. Erstad (2013) says that is a quite new area for Educational research. He emphasize that focus on learning outside school seems to be important to improve education in general.

In higher education you might observe more clearly the gap between interests in practicing music out of school and what offers in educational programs. Even children in ECEC centers could experience a gap between their musical interests outside ECEC centers and the musical content and activities presenting by ECEC teachers.

Education institutions as schools and ECEC centers are not the only arenas for learning. All arenas in a human life might be a location for learning. Internet is today an important information source in children and students learning processes. In light of music education it is possible during few seconds to download all kind of music, so are many programs for learning and producing music. It is rather simple to download apps with musical instruments tuners and guitar courses. Learning how to play music is not only a concern for educational institutions. Other arenas for learning music and learning in general are many. Children are occupied by lot of activities outside of school. In basements the youth starts bands and learn from each other by playing popular music. These informal learning situations seems to be important for developing musicality, but how does educational institution relate to this? Lucy Geen (2008) professor at the University of London conducted a research where she studied informal learning practice of popular musicians (Green, 2002). Derived from the study she started a classroom project to find out: How pedagogy in the music classroom could drawn upon the world of informal popular music learning practice outside school, in order to recognize foster and reward a range of musical skills and knowledge that have not previously been emphasized in music education (Green, 2008, p. 1).

In light of Greens study it might be interesting to look at children's self-organized music activities. Music is a part of a child everyday life. In formal institutions as ECEC centers children express themselves through music both in formal and informal situations. Music assemblies can be arranged by ECEC staff, or music can be a part of play and a child expressions. Experiences from very well planned music assemblies can of course inspire children to do music spontaneously by their own. In other hand by observing children in play and in spontaneously expressions, you will find excellent opportunities to bring a child expression into music assemblies (Sæther, 2008). My purpose is to articulate the opportunity and link between informal and formal learning processes.

At this time we note that educational researchers, who have traditionally focused their study on formal schooling, are finding that informal education has been ignored too long. Educational ethnographic studies have contributed relevant knowledge about children everyday cognition learning. Rosemary Henze at Stanford University (2009) conducted a study of informal teaching and learning in a Greek Community. She got the interests in informal learning situations during many years in Greece where she was included in a Greek family life. She recognized social interaction and participants in everyday cultural activities as important for learning. An effective way of learning could be socializing in cultural activities with "experts" as an effective way of learning. She exemplified that by a dance sequence within a group of experts rather than a step by step instruction by a dance teacher (Henze, 2009).

The focus on informal education might be construed as an absence of attention to formal education. But both formality and informality involves considerable structure (Henze, 2009). The differences appear to the *setting* of the learning processes rather than the teaching and learning processes themselves (Henze, 2009). Already LaBelle (1975) explains *formal* education as *institutionalized* and has a defined curriculum. *Informal* education is "the education of daily living" outside of school. LaBelle (1975) also use the term *non-formal* inspired of *Paolo Freire* grassroots education in Brazil. The non-formal Education is organized but does not take place in institutions. Non – formal learning is linked with community groups and other organizations as choirs, bands, orchestras, schools of dance, all kinds of sports and other leisure activities.

The relevance in this article is the concepts *informal* and *formal* teaching and learning. All activity in ECEC centers compared to the LaBells definitions might be formal in the meaning of institutionalization. In other hand, there is no curriculum in Norwegian ECEC institutions and that means there are local freedom to organize and select content and activities. ECEC institutions can be considered as more informal in general than schools. The concept of learning it selves is not the main focus here. The focus is mostly aimed at learning processes, activities, settings and situations. In education the relationship between teaching and learning is essential. Emphasizes in informal learning processes the teacher might defined teaching as ability to observe children's play, to be an initiator for learning dialogues and give adequate response in a child daily life where children are involved.

Folkestad (2006) identify four different ways of using and defining formal and informal learning. He focus is on different aspects of learning as *learning situations*, *learning style*, *ownership and intentionality*. He emphasizes that concept formal and informal should not be regarded as dichotomy, but rather as two poles of a continuum. In learning situations both aspects are in various degrees present and interacting (Folkestad, 2006, p. 135). The concepts of *formal*, *non – formal* and *informal*, adjusted to the question of who controls the learning process and what kind of learning environment the learning take place (Mak, 2007). The driving force in the learning process is motivation and interest in what to be learned. A research team *Lifelong Learning in Music* (Mak, 2007) pointed out 11 different criteria in the relevance of higher music education. Some of the criteria I find quite relevant in the matter of ECEC education. Informal learning is described as active, voluntary, self- discovering, open – ended, enjoyable and explorative. It is also characterized as self-regulatory processes and more flow-driven (Mak, 2007). These characterizations I find similar to the

criteria about children's play. Play is important in Norwegian ECEC institutions and also as a part of informal learning situations (Lillemyr, 2004).

Professional ECEC- teachers and Informal learning

In the framework of the Norwegian Early Childhood Education Centers you will find the following paragraph:

ECEC Institutions should strengthen children's learning in both formal and informal learning situations. The formal situations are planned and controlled by the staff. Informal learning situations are linked more closely to everyday activities and "here and now" situations, in play, upbringing and other interactions (KD, 2006, p. 27).

Most of time in Norwegian ECEC centers the learning situations are not planned and express an informal style which seems to have an open and freely atmosphere. Description on informal learning refers as we see to involvement in social interaction.

Until now the staff don't need to stress learning outcomes at the same level as expected in schools. ECEC centers are criticized for lack of professionalism because of focus on care rather than learning (Jansen, 2010). For many years ECEC centers in Norway just look like homes. In homes children, develop, explore and learn by interaction with the family in informal learning situation. The number of ECEC center increasing in Norway and there are expecting institution build for leaning. I will argue for limitation of structural teaching, but it will be important that ECEC teachers manage to articulate that there are a lot of ongoing learning processes during informal learning situations. In order to be perceived as a professional, it is important to manage to articulate and justify the importance of informal learning situations.

Formal learning situations are controlled by ECEC teachers and it is a didactic tradition to set up learning outcomes and selected content of music activities. Organized assemblies are common in ECEC centers in the Nordic countries and music is often a part of it. The repertoire can be welcome songs, songs about days, names and of course birthday songs. Music assemblies are also common in ECEC centers in the Nordic countries. Ylva Holmberg (2012) at the University College of Malmö has been studying music assemblies in ECEC centers in Sweden. Here research data are based on 53 music assemblies in three different ECEC centers. She was interested to find out how music events appear, the way of looking at the meaning of music, content and form varies. She found three main musical activities were identified singing, playing instruments and movement. The singing had a character of reproducing, playing instruments was mostly characterized by investigation and movement characterized by both reproducing and investigation (Holmberg, 2012).

In Norwegian ECEC framework (KD, 2011) its emphasized that children's creativity and opportunities for interaction is important. The competence in music by ECEC teachers might affect the quality of music assemblies. It could be an essential factor for inspiration for children spontaneous music production in informal activities. Holmberg (2012) found in here research that the repertoire was traditional, a familiar repertoire well known by ECEC teachers in Sweden. The purpose of the music assemblies is not always clear. Is it just for joy and to strengthen social interaction? The content of music in ECEC centers should be focused on learning music. It means learning about and trough basic elements as rhythm, timbre, dynamics, tempo, music instruments and genre (Pramling & Wallerstedt, 2010).

Musical skills will be important to develop musical creativity. One of the music activities Holmberg (2010) refers to is movements.

The movements mostly illustrate the content of the songs, it means another reproducing activity. When the music assemblies finished the children started their own activity by using the cd- player the activity changed from reproducing to include improvisation and experimentation (Holmberg, 2010, p. 10)

Structured music assemblies may shade other music expression in ECEC. Learning through everyday activities may give less attention if ECEC centers introduce lot of formal and structural teaching and learning situations.

In the period of (2009 -2011) I did a research of the project; *Competence development trough interaction between teachers Early Childhood Education and Care centers and teacher from school of music and performing arts*. During four video - taped group interviews and a narrative analysis of dialogs between two professions of teachers arise the discussion of informal and formal teaching and learning in music. I recognized that the two teacher professions articulate quite different about music activities in ECEC centers. ECEC teacher emphasize music activities in informal situations as important but it seems to be quite difficult to articulate the teacher role and what children benefit from it (Sæther, 2012 b).

The teachers from Schools of Music and Performing arts perceive themselves as experts in teaching music. They prefer structural music assemblies guided of the music teacher. Music education in Norway is based on master- apprenticeship and the concept of master apprenticeship as a teaching method is well rooted in music education (Waagen, 2011). During the study of music the students observe, imitate and identify technics and interpretation of the teacher. The teachers represent expertise and they are important role models for students music performances. Experiences from an education based on master apprenticeship may have influenced the way of teaching also in ECEC institutions.

During the collaboration both professions was challenged to other approaches to music activities. Among the interview respondents representing ECEC centers notes that they are not experts in music but they do music with children in different situations like in wardrobe and outside play situations.

My experience is that ECEC teachers practice a lot of teaching trough dialogs and the practice also includes music. But this is not articulated as expertise. Research in professional studies point out that exclusive expertise is important for authority and professionalism (Abbott, 1988). ECEC teacher profession can be considered a "weak" profession partly because the mandate is strongly governed from above, the profession expresses knowledge is perceived as public domain and the education builds on numerous scientific disciplines (Grimen, 2008). For both professions are practical knowledge an essential part of professional conduct. Michael Polanyi (2002) introduced the term "tacit knowledge". He believes that tacit knowledge involves a task, and refers to the activity to know. A key point is that tacit knowledge is not always possible to formulate as propositional where one of the criteria is that it can be explained verbally (Johannesen cited in Åsvoll, 2009).

Johannesen (cited in Åsvoll, 2009) introduce distinctions between propositional knowledge, practical skills and knowledge of familiarity experience. These concepts I find similar to Aristoteles concepts *episteme, techne and fronesis*. To know *how* and *what* to do in several informal learning situations is based on the tree types of knowledge, but it is action of teaching a professional ECEC teacher express that includes tacit knowledge. To articulate the meaning of informal learning situations it will be important to articulate for example reflections of dialogues, interactions and the potential of children expression in here and now situations. With reference to my research (Sæther, 2012 b) I observed the dialogues where the involved participants tried hardly to articulate the professional attitude and view of teaching music in ECEC centers.

Tacit knowledge is possible to articulate via active reflection and discussion between practitioners (Gottvassli, 2004). It's in the dialogue between the different parties that the meaning is created (Bakhtin cited in Gottvassli, 2004).

Learning situations in a stimulating environment

As we have seen it is complicated to describe any situation as either informal or as formal, both situations can change during a learning process. As Folkestad (2006) said the concept formal and informal should be regarded as two poles off a continuum. ECEC centers are parts of the formal education system. It means that all activities, planned or not planned including children's play, spontaneous and improvised activities initiated by the ECEC staff is a part of the formal education system. Another important perspective is that ECEC teachers by virtue of their profession represent formal framework where there are expectations from parents, colleagues and the national framework who emphasizing the various development goals and learning outcomes.

There are opportunities for open settings in ECEC centers that all situations can be learning situations, that is, and openness to dialogue and the involvement of children just to be a quality at ECEC teacher, formal competence.

In ECEC centers on the other hand, it is possible to look at the child itself as a starting point to a greater extent; an approach enabling ECEC teachers to challenge and adapt activities to each individual child. Children in ECEC centers will display varying levels of maturity and motivation for reading, writing, and mathematics. In my opinion, the possibilities of the ECEC centers with regard to enhancing basic skills for school-age children involve a strengthening of the premises for learning in general.

Lillemyr (2004) employs the term basic competence related to the development of social skills and the development of language and communication. Basic skills are defined as the fundamental competence acquired by children in preparation for their future lives, where social skills and communicative ability constitute key factors (Lillemyr, 2004).

To acquire knowledge about children's various skills- may contribute to stimulating the child's development in all areas. It is my opinion that a strengthening of the premises for learning is the better approach. This involves possibilities inherent in music for stimulation of the child to ensure comprehensive development.

In ECEC centers, there is a setting where children can experience, the staff can address the interests of the children, give children opportunities for mastering and creating a safe environment allowing children the bravery of taking on challenges. A stimulating ECEC center environment must, in my experience, contain these qualities.

Musical and creative expressions in informal situations

In ECEC centers, music and musical activities have played a large role in everyday life, and have not been justified by external objectives. The children's own musical expressions have been clearly evident in ECEC centers. Studies by Sundin (2001) indicate that children have a fundamental need for expressing themselves musically. Musical activities present ample opportunity for fulfilling children's needs for versatile learning. Music is a natural part of the child's holistic mode of expression, not in the least during play. A child expresses their own culture through spontaneous singing in here and now situations (Bjørkvold, 2005).

The musical experience and children's own musical expressions must be the main goal of the music-related activities. Only then can the musical activities contribute to strengthening the basis for learning within other fields (Sæther, 2012 a). Children's abilities to experience, and express holistic

views, must be the basis for defining the content of both formal and informal learning in ECEC institutions.

The most important is *children's curiosity* as well as the need to explore and make use of creative expressions. My objective is to demonstrate *that music as a medium* may prove to be particularly conducive to the development of children's basic skills. Children's play is an expression of what the child perceive as "here and now". I claim that some of the strength of ECEC culture is to be found exactly in this informal setting where the child itself is the driving force. The motivation is found in the curiosity and urge to explore. Music is a medium that allows children room for: listening, expressing, and playing together in both producing (create) re-producing activities (Bjørlykke, 2001; Sæther, 2012 a).

Musical development can be seen in connection with children's own spontaneous and varied expressions, but also in the meeting with organized forms of activities as song, dance, play, rhyme and verse. Elements from songs, melodies and rhythms children come into contact with in ECEC centers, often materialized in edited forms in spontaneous singing (Bjørkvold, 1979). In the other direction, expression with safety in using musical elements in play can contribute to developing skills in organized music activities.

Musical experiences and expression in both spontaneous and organized activities are closely connected. The ECEC teacher can, with experience based on observation and an attitude of recognition toward spontaneous performance, stimulate the child's development. The spontaneous musical expression should be considered similar to other forms of spontaneous expression, for example language improvisation and questions asked by the child. Dialogue in *here-and-now* situations presents room for interaction with the child at a time when it is interested and motivated. This informal learning situation can contribute to an effective learning result since the situation is perceived as important for the child. In such settings, it is important to "read" the child's comprehensive expression.

By this, I mean that the child not only expressed words, sounds, movements, or that the expressions can be categorized as phrases linked to subjects like music, language, mathematics, sciences etc. The expressions are often related to situations in social context where everything is linked together.

Music in informal learning situations - Episodes from ECEC institution

In the period of the last ten years I have been supervising students throughout their practical fieldwork in ECEC centers. The supervising has been carried on in different ECEC institutions. During the visits I observed play, different learning activities, interactions or lack of interactions between students and children. What I observed was linked to my academic interests of musical activities and learning situations. After observation I wrote logs on what I have observed in the current situations. Observation as a method means that the researcher are involved in situations where is relevant for the study (Johannesen, Tufte & Christophersen, 2010). Observation involves looking, listening very carefully.

My involvement was not about interaction in action but the presence in the setting may affect situation and the activity. My observations were written down after I left the ECEC centers. There are different types of observation in field research. In this particular case I mostly used direct observation in "here and now" situations. Direct observation is characterized as unaided by any instruments, natural setting, less structured and about everyday situations and interaction between people (Johannesen, Tufte & Christophersen, 2010). My visit in ECEC centers in the first place was about supervising students in practical work rather than conduct a research. However I reflected and interpreted the observations and found them quite interesting and useful as examples on music informal learning situations.

The analyses of the observations are inspired of thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). The term narrative is often seen synonymously with “story”. A story has a beginning, middle and end, but the essence of a story is the plot.

In other words the content is the focus. In my setting the narratives were constructed stories based on observations and the content that I interpret in my observation was learning situations. Empirical data, theoretical, epistemological positions, research questions can be very different. It means it is no rules for analyzing, primary the attention is on “what is said” (Riesmann, 2008). In my case there where even not a told story. I analyzed what’s happened in activities and s I looked at the observations as episodes.

Donald E. Polkinghorne (1995) looks at narrative methods in another way, as a contrast or a supplement to the tradition where the persons narrative or narratives represents in a style of biography. Polkinghorne does a distinction between two types of narratives inquiry: a) analysis of narratives, that is, studies whose data consist of narratives and b) narrative analysis, that is, studies whose data consist of actions, events and happenings whose analysis produces stories. (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12).

I place my narrative analyses particular on the second of these types. I constructed narratives named as episodes on what I observed. The narratives are subjective descriptions of my interpretation of what I have observed. My own academic history, experience pre- understanding may affect the interpretation. Hopefully my narratives, here represented as episode have qualities of recognition in the field of music and learning situations.

The ECEC teacher’s Role in Informal Learning Situations

What is required of the ECEC teacher to make everyday situations into learning situations?

I posit that the educators presence (have focus on the child’s activity), attitude, ability for observation, and interpretational competence are qualities that can contribute to beneficial informal learning situations. First and foremost, it is a question of being present where and when the children “perform”, not in the least during their play; not necessarily as a participant but as an observer. The ECEC teacher can stimulate the child and be supportive when it seeks attention. If you actively observe children’ urge to explore, their expressions of fantasy, the use of improvisation, expression of social skills, and communication, you will also see opportunities for stimulating the child based on its current level of skills. You will see opportunities in the child’s everyday situations. This is a matter of observation, the ability to see what is happening there and then.

What we observe depends on the “lenses” we use. How we view children’s activities, play or spontaneous expressions, is vital in the determining how we relate to the child. We can stimulate more activity; enter into improvisation with the child. It is also possible to view children’s interaction as unimportant or noisy-disturbing.

Episode 1

I had just come through the door of an ECEC institution, visiting students during their period of practice. A group of children came marching toward me with music-instruments they had found in drawers and cupboards, not traditional instruments. They were playing building blocks, spoons, plastic tubs, knives and other things. They made a lot of sound as they marched excitedly in a row. They were playing “marching band” and seemed very pleased with themselves. A ECEC teacher stood with the back toward the children and asked them to be quiet. They were told to go back to their unit and stay in the playroom if they were to continue making so much noise.

In the playroom, there was probably too little space for these children to develop their imitation of a marching band, and they probably also wanted to share their joy of playing with the rest of the kindergarten.

These children were exploring tone, rhythm, and motion while forming a line. This was an example of an informal learning situation, a here –and-now situation where the youngest could learn from the older children. It could also be a situation where the teacher could have observed and supported the activity.

Episode 2

After a long day of many visits to different ECEC centers this was the last stop, at a downtown ECEC center. This was in the afternoon, and many children had already been picked up by their parents. I was talking to a student at the dining table while a girl of about two years impatiently jumped around. She was also waiting to be picked up. In this episode the student used the Norwegian counting song *En elefant kom marsjerende* (One elephant came marching). The student had many questions about language observation and language stimulation. While we talked, the girl started taking objects down from the windowsill and placing them on the table where we were seated. She obviously wanted attention and initiated contact by asking, in her own dialect, as she held up the different figures: What, who, etc. She activated us into commenting and explaining; a ceramic elephant, a woolen rabbit, a blue glass ball, and a white stone were placed on the table. The student initiated a conversation about the elephant; the trunk, its size, weight etc. With dramatic voice, the student sang: “One elephant came marching”.... In the second verse, she placed the rabbit behind the elephant and sang, “Two elephants came marching”.... This caused some laughter, as this was obviously not an elephant. The next conversation revolved around the rabbit with its long ears and who could jump. Now I enjoyed and we sang, “a rabbit came jumping”. When the glass ball rolled around the table, we sang, “The glass ball comes rolling”, while the final verse was about the stone. We throw it around on the table and sing, “A white stone comes bouncing”.

Instead of discussing examples of how you can initiate language-stimulating activities, we were given a live demonstration of how this could be done. We focused on the child’s curiosity about the objects and need for dialogue and being together. Based on a song well known to the child, we improvised, and this informal learning situation turned into a positive learning activity both in music and language.

This episode of an informal situation could also be a good starting point for a formal learning situation with a group of children, perhaps the day after!

We have seen that informal learning situations can work well, especially in individual encounters with children. Experiences from similar learning situations can be drawn upon when organizing more structured gatherings. The two-year old girl could be shown that children in her group could learn the same song she heard from the teacher the day before. This helps recognize the child and will contribute to involving the child in activities. There will be opportunities to create links between informal situations, the interests of the children and planned assemblies.

Episode 3

Outside the ECEC center a construction project had been started. Right in front of the children and ECEC staff, an excavator, a hoisting crane, and a truck were in action. To the staff, this might represented quite a disturbance. The children, however seemed highly interested in what was going on, and much of the time outdoors was spent studying the trucks and machines. In the sandbox, similar projects could often be seen during the children's play.

Based on the current affairs, and what was close at hand. One of the ECEC teachers started drawing what she could observe at the construction site. She enlarged the headlights of the "cars" to turn them into eyes and named them: Eric Excavator, Harry Hoisting Crane, and Tom Truck. Stories about these three were made up and presented to the children at the assembly. Through friends from this kindergarten, I heard about this and my interest was picked. I visited the kindergarten and was immensely inspired I even decided to make about Eric Excavator and the others.

One of the songs:

Tekst: Liv Astrid Egge Melodi: Morten Sæther

Geir: C G7 C Ludvig:

Jeg jaf - ser sand og fyl - ler lass og tri - ves godt med det. Jeg

C G7 C Begge:

kjø - rer sand og tip - per lass og tri - ves godt meg det, men

G7 C

san - da kan bli tung og våt når reg - net plas - ker ned. Men

G7 C

jeg blir ik - ke sur og lei når jeg får fly - av - sted.

(I guzzle sand and fill loads, and I am happy about this,
but the sand becomes very heavy when the rain is pouring down.
I get so tired, sour and worn out, I'd rather prefer some rest).

(My translation in English is only for explain the content)

Experiences and engagements from the outdoor event might give a good start for many creative, spontaneous esthetical activities in both informal and informal learning situations. A holistic view on learning in music and other subjects can contribute to learning situations where links between children's own expressions and organized activities can stimulate growth and learning. What

happened right outside the ECEC might activate children in voluntary, self- discovering, enjoyable and explorative situations as Mak (2007) point out as criteria for informal learning.

Conclusion

Music activities plays a part in informal teaching and learning situations in Early Childhood Education and Care centers. When the political debate in media addresses quality development to more systematic education in basic skills and the knowledge, informal learning situations might get less attention. The purpose of this article has been to discuss the potential of informal learning situations. Folkestad (2006) point out that concept formal and informal should not be regarded as dichotomy, but rather as two poles of a continuum. Not planned interaction with children in several situations and location might be a driving force for learning processes.

Observations of the way children express themselves in informal learning situation in order to involve them in more formal learning situations as planned assemblies. Systematization of situations, or implementing more structured daily routines, may not constitute the best solution – but rather ensuring that educators are getting better at structuring observations and experience from children's play and explorations. In the Norwegian ECEC framework (KD, 2011) its emphasized that children's creativity and opportunities of interaction is important. Holmberg (2012) found in her research that the repertoire was traditional. She characterized the content of organized music assemblies either as reproducing or investigation.

Children's own spontaneous expression in musical creativity should also be a part of formal learning situations. Musical experiences and expression in both spontaneous and organized activities are closely connected. The ECEC teacher can, with experience based on observation and an attitude of recognition toward spontaneous performance add creativity and creation of music into formal learning situations.

According to Abbott (1988) Expertise is important for authority and professionalism. It will be important for jurisdiction of the professional ECEC teachers to articulate and justify informal teaching and learning as meaningful for children holistic development.

The narrative episode in this article exemplified perspectives on ECEC teachers role in informal learning situations. Understanding of a child holistic development and learning trough dialogues and interaction in *here and now* situation should be loudly articulated as important professional knowledge among ECEC teachers.

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